

# NUTRITION

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## **Workplace: Choosing Foods and Beverages for Healthy Employees**

Many workers consume a significant portion of food away from home. Foods consumed at cafeterias, from vending machines and public food-service establishments are often not as nutritious or healthy as foods prepared at home. In general, Americans' diets exceed saturated fat and sodium recommendations and few Americans are meeting fruit, vegetable and whole grain recommendations. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides guidance on a diet that promotes health and may help prevent the effects of diet-related chronic diseases. Making healthy foods available at work is one way to encourage employees to eat a healthy diet.

### **Tips for Healthier Eating at Work**

#### **Offer a variety of grains – especially whole grains**

Grains come in many shapes and sizes, from large kernels of popcorn to small quinoa seeds. Grains, also called cereals, are the widely varied seeds of grasses, which are cultivated for food. They are a good source of complex carbohydrates, fiber, and various vitamins and minerals and are naturally low in fat.

#### **Fruits and Vegetables**

Provide a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Contact your local vending machine operator to see if they offer a variety of fruits and vegetables as selections. This will allow employees to select healthier snacks from the vending machine such as nuts, apples and celery sticks. It is recommended that a person eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

#### **Provide fat-free, low-fat or low-calorie foods and beverages**

Providing foods and beverages that are fat-free, low fat or low-calorie can cut calories, sugar and fat. Ideas include fat-free or low-fat dressings or toppings such as salsa, low-fat yogurt dressing, sweet mustard, or low-calorie desserts. Encourage employees to substitute high fat, high calorie foods with low-fat, low-calorie food. This can be accomplished by planning menus for work-related events.

#### **Serve foods that are low in salt and sodium**

The American Heart Association recommends that healthy Americans should reduce their sodium intake to no more than 2400 milligrams per day. This is about 1 teaspoon of sodium. However, if you have hypertension or a family history of chronic diseases it is important to consult your physician. Offer unsalted pretzels, popcorn, baked chips, or entrees cooked in spices.

#### **Offer foods and beverages low in added sugars**

Serve unsweetened cereals, fruit spreads, cereal bars, water, 100% fruit juices and regular and decaffeinated coffee or tea.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

